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U.S Reps. Peter Roskam, R-6th, and Mark Kirk, R-10th, used a press conference at the Elk Grove High School cafeteria April 8 to promote a proposed piece of legislation intended to tighten the nation's food security.

"Simply one life is worth the effort," Roskam said of the proposed Keeping America's Food Safe Act of 2008.

Roskam said the bill would close a "loophole" allowing foreign companies to "shop around" for favorable lab test results. The freshman congressman did not know the estimated cost of enforcing such regulations.

"I would suggest the larger cost is the cost of doing nothing," Roskam said.

Roskam's proposed bill would force private labs to disclose negative testing data to the Food and Drug Administration. Roskam, a former state legislator from Wheaton, said food laws dating back to the early 1900s required an update.

A world map next to the representatives highlighted countries that have exported unsafe products to the United States. China's lengthy list of goods included items ranging from toothpaste to pet food to fruit-flavored chews.

"The American people have seen too many dangerous products from overseas," Kirk said.

Documents furnished by Kirk showed eight new FDA employees are now working in China to help resolve safety issues. The fourth-term congressman and Highland Park resident added that he hoped Roskam's bill would launch a "virtuous cycle" of honest lab result reporting.

No particular incident prompted him to propose the "proactive" legislation, Roskam said.

"Government takes the initiative. Details at 10. Shocking," he said before the meeting.